and as a result of it this Act has become ineffective.

SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act is not being enforced strictly in Gujarat state. Thus, the incidents of atrocities on tribal women/men are increasing continuously.

The Central Government is urged upon to direct the State Governments, especially the Gujarat government to strictly enforce the SC & ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act and immediate legal action should be taken under the provisions of this Act against the person found prima facie guility of committing atrocities on tribals.

I would also like to make a demand that the administrative/police officers found to be lacking in taking action against the guility persons, should be suspended/ dismissed from the service with immediate effect. Only then all the concerned officers will enforce this SC and ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act enacted by the Central Government.

(iii) Need to take steps to protect the interests of Indian Consultants in Joint Venture Public Enterprises

[English]

SHRI AJOY MUKHOPADHYAY (Krishnagar) : It is reported that foreign consultants with little acumen and experience in India are being hired to locate Indians for suitable top positions in Joint Sector Enterprises when Indian Consultants with far better credentials, experience and facilities are available. It is happening even in those joint sector enterprises where Indian compaines have majority equity participation.

Hexacom India Limited is a joint venture company with two-thirds equity being held by TCIL, a Central PSU and Shyam Telecom Ltd., a private sector unit and the remaining one third by a Canadian Telecom multinational. The company thas been awarded licence for Mobile Cellular Services in Rajasthan. They asked for Indian top level consultants to quote for placement service; but it is understood that they are awarding the job to a foreign head hunting organisation at a fee reported to be of the order of eight to ten times per placement, as compared to that quoted by one of the topmost Indian Consultants. The plea is that the foreign joint venture partner has all along been used to working with the foreign head hunting firm. It is not just a case of giving preference foreign consultant over Indian consultants, but adding to the project cost also.

I urge upon the Union Government to take necessary steps to ensure that the interest of Indian Consultants are protected in Joint Sector Enterprises and Joint Sector Compaines.

(iv) Need to declare existing connecting roads falling on long coastal areas of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu as National Highway

SHRI K. PARASURAMAN (Chengalpatu) : The existing National Highway from Calcutta to Madras (Chennai) is very much congested due to heavy traffic on this National Highway, particularly due to transportation of manufactured goods, foodgrains and raw materials. The plight of this Highway is aggravated due to cyclone and heavy rains during the season. They severely hinder the movement of goods on the Highway. It is, therefore urgently felt, necessary to take over the existing roads connecting Hyderabad, the capital of Andhra Pradesh, and other important towns of Kurnool, Cuddapah, Tirupati, Arakkonam, Kancheepuram, Vandavasi, Dindivanam and Villupuram and declare it as National Highway. This route will serve as second connecting road to Calcutta and other adjoining State capitals including Maharashtra. Since the National Highway is falling on the long coastal area of Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, heavy rains and cyclone occurring a almost every year in the coastal region not only damage the roads including the Highways but also flood the small rivers at many crossings of Highways which render the traffic out of gear for several weeks.

Sir, a second route as suggested above up to Hyderabad would definitely go a long way in quick movement of goods by road, apart from easing the congestion in the existing National Highway. The necessity of having a second route has been there for more than two decades now.

I would, therefore, request the hon. Minister of Surface Transport to take immediate action for taking over and declaring the existing connecting roads between Hyderabad and the towns of Kurnool, Cuddapah, Tirupati, Arakkonam, Kancheepuram, Vandavasi, Dindivanam and Villupuram, as National Highway.

(v) Need to defuse strike of the employees of ONGC demanding construction of office building and staff quarters at Rajamundry, Andhra Pradesh

SHRI T. GOPAL KRISHNA (Kakinada) : There is exploration of Oil and Gas in Krishna-Godavari Basin of Andhra Pradesh. However, Gas Supply from there to industries has been hit as ONGC strike continues in that region. The demands of the employees include establishing regional office of ONGC at Rajahmundry and construction of office building complex and staff quarters in the area.

The State Government of Andhra Pradesh has already allotted five acres of land at Rajahmundry for construction of the Regional Office. The ONGC has also been given

[Shri T. Gopal Krishna]

land in Narsapur for construction of Staff Quarters. But it seems there is no progress in this regard. The delay in execution of the above two demands resulted in strike of staff working there. I, therefore, request the Minister for Petroleum and Natural Gas to take steps for immediate negotiations with the employees of the ONGC working in Andhra Pradesh for acceding to their demands at an early date.

15.32 hrs.

MOTION OF THANKS ON THE PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS–*Contd.*

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN : Now, we shall take up the Motion of Thanks on the President's Address. Time allotted for it is nine hours. The balance time at the disposal is five hours and twenty-nine minutes. Sharimati Geeta Mukherjee.

SHRIMATI GEETA MUKHERJEE (Panskura) : Thank you Sir for calling me. I rise to to support the Motion of Thanks on Rashtrapathi's Address. The Address has listed some achievements, internal and external within seven months of the tenure of the United Front Government.

For example, among the internal achievements, some of the most important are holding peaceful elections in Kashmir, and imparting a measure of dynamism to the Inter-State Council and related measures which would help in giving more powers and share of resources to the States. Both were long overdue.

Externally, Treaty with Bangladesh for sharing of Ganga waters, considerable improvement in our relations with our neighbours, including People's Republic of China are some such positive examples.

We know there are several pending internal issues which require urgent attention and vigorous action like for example steep rise in the prices of essential commodities which need to be tackled urgently.

Similarly, the matter of reopening the numerous closed industries and rehabilitation of the sick public sector units are issues which have to be urgently tackled. All these affect the vast masses.

Of course, we, the Left Parties, understand that there are serious problems and serval economic compulsions which follow from the past realities created by the earlier regime. We also understand that the Common Minimum Programme cannot be fully implemented in a matter of months.

But we feel that the electorates which brought about this important political change in our country through the last General Election, which installed the United Front Government have certain expectations from it and are carefully watching the direction the United Front Government follow. When the Left Parties criticise certain measures or policy directions of the Government, we hope that our non-Left friends in the United Front will understand that this is an expression of our concern about some of these urgent issues in the interest of the common people and not in any partisan interest of ours.

Hon. Rashtrapatiji's Address contained many important subjects. Speakers of different political parties are dealing with those subjects. The second speaker from CPI will also deal with some of those subjects, but in my speech, today, I want to concentrate on one issue only, that is, on the constitution Eighty-First (Amendment) Bill 1996 providing one-third reservation of seats for women in Lok Sabha and in Legislative Assemblies. I hope my colleagues will not mind to that.

Of course, in Rashtrapatiji's Address, there are only two places where this Bill has been mentioned. One is in the list of pending Bills and the other reference is in Paragraph 29. Here, I would like to quote that paragraph:

> "We are also keen to promote gender equality and removal of discrimination against women. As you know, the Government has already introduced a Bill for Reservation of Seats for Women in Lok Sabha and Legislative Assemblies to ensure their better participation in policy making."

But is there any commitment to pass the Bill in this Session itself? There is no such commitment.

As far as the description of the Bill is concerned, there also the word 'one-third' is missing before the word 'reservation'. Because of this, I believe, not only myself but all the women and men MPs, who want this Bill to be passed, will feel disheartened. Moreover, the women of our country who are eagerly waiting for the passage of this historic Bill will not only be deeply disheartened but may seriously doubt the pious wish expressed in the sentence and I quote:

> "We are also keen to promote gender equality and removal of discrimination against women."

I implore the Government to take note of it and to answer the questions which I am going to ask now. Is the Government stepping back from its promise made in its Common Minimum Programme? I would like to remind the Government and would once again like to quite from its Common Minimum Programme:

"That one-third of the elected representatives in